

# OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

After reviewing data collected from **NORTHWOOD LAKE, NORTHWOOD**, the program coordinators have made the following observations and recommendations:

We would like to thank your group for sampling your lake **once** this summer. However, we encourage your monitoring group to sample **additional** times each summer. Typically we recommend that monitoring groups sample **three times** per summer (once in **June, July**, and **August**). We understand that the number of sampling events you decide to conduct per summer will depend upon volunteer availability, and your monitoring group's water monitoring goals and funding availability. However, with a limited amount of data it is difficult to determine accurate and representative water quality trends. Since weather patterns and activity in the watershed can change throughout the summer, from year to year, and even from hour to hour during a rain event, it is a good idea to sample the lake at least once per month over the course of the season.

If you are having difficulty finding volunteers to help sample, or to pick-up or drop-off equipment at one of the laboratories, please give the VLAP Coordinator a call and we will try to help you work out an arrangement.

## **FIGURE INTERPRETATION**

- **Figure 1 and Table 1:** Figure 1 (Appendix A) shows the historical and current year chlorophyll-a concentration in the water column. Table 1 (Appendix B) lists the maximum, minimum, and mean concentration for each sampling season that the lake has been monitored through VLAP.

Chlorophyll-a, a pigment found in plants, is an indicator of the algal abundance. Because algae are usually microscopic plants that contain chlorophyll-a, and are naturally found in lake ecosystems, the chlorophyll-a concentration measured in the water gives an estimation of the algal concentration or lake productivity. **The**

**median summer chlorophyll-a concentration for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is 4.58 mg/m<sup>3</sup>.**

The current year data show that the chlorophyll-a concentration on the **August** sampling event was *greater than* state median and the similar lake median (for more information on the similar lake median, refer to Appendix F). It is important to point out that the chlorophyll concentration measured in **August** is the **second-highest** chlorophyll concentration that has been measured in the lake since monitoring began.

Overall, visual inspection of the historical data trend line (the bottom graph) shows an *increasing, meaning worsening*, in-lake chlorophyll-a trend since monitoring began in **1991**.

After 10 consecutive years of sample collection, we will be able to conduct a statistical analysis of the historical data to objectively determine if there has been a significant change in the annual mean chlorophyll-a concentration since monitoring began.

While algae are naturally present in all lakes, an excessive or increasing amount of any type is not welcomed. In freshwater lakes, phosphorus is the nutrient that algae depend upon for growth. Algal concentrations may increase as nonpoint sources of phosphorus from the watershed increase, or as in-lake phosphorus sources increase (such as sediment phosphorus releases, known as internal loading). Therefore, it is extremely important for volunteer monitors to continually educate all watershed residents about activities within the watershed that affect phosphorus loading and lake quality.

- **Figure 2 and Table 3:** Figure 2 (Appendix A) shows the historical and current year data for lake transparency. Table 3 (Appendix B) lists the maximum, minimum and mean transparency data for each sampling season that the lake has been monitored through VLAP.

Volunteer monitors use the Secchi-disk, a 20 cm disk with alternating black and white quadrants, to measure water clarity (how far a person can see into the water). Transparency, a measure of water clarity, can be affected by the amount of algae and sediment from erosion, as well as the natural colors of the water. **The median summer transparency for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is 3.2 meters.**

The current year data show that the in-lake transparency on the **August** sampling event was *less than* the state median and similar

lake median (refer to Appendix F for more information about the similar lake median).

Overall, visual inspection of the historical data trend line (the bottom graph) shows a ***slightly decreasing, meaning slightly worsening***, trend for in-lake transparency since monitoring began.

Typically, high intensity rainfall causes sediment erosion to flow into lakes and streams, thus increasing turbidity and decreasing clarity. Efforts should continually be made to stabilize stream banks, lake shorelines, disturbed soils within the watershed, and especially dirt roads located immediately adjacent to the edge of tributaries and the lake. Guides to Best Management Practices designed to reduce, and possibly even eliminate, nonpoint source pollutants, such as sediment loading, are available from DES upon request.

- **Figure 3 and Table 8:** The graphs in Figure 3 (Appendix A) show the amount of epilimnetic (upper layer) phosphorus and hypolimnetic (lower layer) phosphorus; the inset graphs show current year data. Table 8 (Appendix B) lists the annual maximum, minimum, and median concentration for each deep spot layer and each tributary since the lake has joined VLAP.

Phosphorus is the limiting nutrient for plant and algae growth in New Hampshire's freshwater lakes and ponds. Excessive phosphorus in a lake can lead to increased plant and algal growth over time. **The median summer total phosphorus concentration in the epilimnion (upper layer) of New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is 12 ug/L. The median summer phosphorus concentration in the hypolimnion (lower layer) is 14 ug/L.**

The current year data for the epilimnion show that the phosphorus concentration on the **August** sampling event was ***slightly greater than*** the state median and the similar lake median (refer to Appendix F for more information about the similar lake median).

The current year data for the hypolimnion show that the phosphorus concentration on the **August** sampling event was ***slightly greater than*** the state median and ***slightly less than*** the similar lake median.

Overall, visual inspection of the historical data trend line for the epilimnion and hypolimnion shows a ***variable*** phosphorus trend. Specifically, the mean annual epilimnetic phosphorus concentration has ***fluctuated between approximately 5.0 and 17.7 ug/L*** and the hypolimnetic phosphorus concentration has ***fluctuated between approximately 6.5 and 18.5 ug/L*** since monitoring began in 1991.

As discussed previously, after 10 consecutive years of sample collection, we will be able to conduct a statistical analysis of the historical data to objectively determine if there has been a significant change in the annual mean phosphorus concentration since monitoring began.

One of the most important approaches to reducing phosphorus loading to a waterbody is to continually educate watershed residents about its sources and how excessive amounts can adversely impact the ecology and the recreational, economical, and ecological value of lakes. Phosphorus sources within a lake's watershed typically include septic systems, animal waste, lawn fertilizer, road and construction erosion, and natural wetlands.

#### **TABLE INTERPRETATION**

➤ **Table 2: Phytoplankton**

Table 2 (Appendix B) lists the current and historical phytoplankton species observed in the lake. Specifically, this table lists the three most dominant phytoplankton species observed in the sample and their relative abundance in the sample.

The dominant phytoplankton species observed in the **August** sample were ***Asterionella* (diatom)**, ***Gleocystis* (green)**, and ***Tabellaria* diatom**.

Phytoplankton populations undergo a natural succession during the growing season (Please refer to the "Biological Monitoring Parameters" section of this report for a more detailed explanation regarding seasonal plankton succession). Diatoms and golden-brown algae are typical in New Hampshire's less productive lakes and ponds.

➤ **Table 4: pH**

Table 4 (Appendix B) presents the in-lake and tributary current year and historical pH data.

pH is measured on a logarithmic scale of 0 (acidic) to 14 (basic). pH is important to the survival and reproduction of fish and other aquatic life. A pH below 6.0 limits the growth and reproduction of fish. A pH between 6.0 and 7.0 is ideal for fish. The median pH value for the epilimnion (upper layer) in New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is **6.6**, which indicates that the surface waters in the state are slightly acidic. For a more detailed explanation regarding pH, please refer to the "Chemical Monitoring Parameters" section of this report.

The pH at the deep spot on the **August** sampling event ranged from **6.19** in the hypolimnion to **6.33** in the epilimnion, which means that the water is ***slightly acidic***.

It is important to point out that the pH in the hypolimnion (lower layer) was ***lower (more acidic)*** than in the epilimnion (upper layer). This increase in acidity near the lake bottom is likely due the decomposition of organic matter and the release of acidic by-products into the water column.

Due to the presence of granite bedrock in the state and acid deposition (from snowmelt, rainfall, and atmospheric particulates) in New Hampshire, there is not much that can be done to effectively increase lake pH.

➤ **Table 5: Acid Neutralizing Capacity**

Table 5 (Appendix B) presents the current year and historical epilimnetic ANC for each year the lake has been monitored through VLAP.

Buffering capacity (ANC) describes the ability of a solution to resist changes in pH by neutralizing the acidic input. The median ANC value for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is **4.9 mg/L**, which indicates that many lakes and ponds in the state are at least "moderately vulnerable" to acidic inputs. For a more detailed explanation, please refer to the "Chemical Monitoring Parameters" section of this report.

The mean Acid Neutralizing Capacity (ANC) of the epilimnion (the upper layer) was **3.3 mg/L** this season, which is ***less than*** the state median. In addition, this indicates that the lake is ***moderately vulnerable*** to acidic inputs (such as acid precipitation).

➤ **Table 6: Conductivity**

Table 6 (Appendix B) presents the current and historical conductivity values for tributaries and in-lake data. Conductivity is the numerical expression of the ability of water to carry an electric current (which is determined by the number of negatively charged ions from metals, salts, and minerals in the water column). The median conductivity value for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is **40.0 uMhos/cm**. For a more detailed explanation, please refer to the "Chemical Monitoring Parameters" section of this report.

The epilimnetic conductivity on the **August** sampling event was **84.11 uMhos/cm**, which is ***greater than*** the state median.

The conductivity has **increased** in the lake and inlet tributaries since monitoring began. Typically, sources of increased conductivity are due to human activity. These activities include failed or marginally functioning septic systems, agricultural runoff, and road runoff (which contains road salt during the spring snow melt). New development in the watershed can alter runoff patterns and expose new soil and bedrock areas, which could contribute to increasing conductivity. In addition, natural sources, such as iron and manganese deposits in bedrock, can influence conductivity.

We recommend that your monitoring group conduct stream surveys and storm event sampling along the inlet(s) with **elevated** conductivity so that we can determine potential sources to the lake.

*For a detailed explanation on how to conduct rain event sampling and stream surveys, please refer to the 2002 V LAP Annual Report “Special Topic Article” or contact the V LAP Coordinator.*

It is possible that de-icing materials applied to nearby roadways during the winter months may be influencing the conductivity in the lake. In New Hampshire, the most commonly used de-icing material is salt (sodium chloride).

Therefore, we recommend that the **epilimnion** (upper layer) and the inlets near roadways be sampled for chloride next season. This sampling may help us pinpoint what areas of the watershed which are contributing to the increasing in-lake conductivity.

*Please note that there will be an additional cost for each of the chloride samples and that these samples must be analyzed at the DES laboratory in Concord. In addition, it is best to conduct chloride sampling in the spring as the snow is melting and during rain events.*

➤ **Table 8: Total Phosphorus**

Table 8 (Appendix B) presents the current year and historical total phosphorus data for in-lake and tributary stations. Phosphorus is the nutrient that limits the algae’s ability to grow and reproduce. Please refer to the “Chemical Monitoring Parameters” section of this report for a more detailed explanation.

The total phosphorus concentration was **elevated (34 ug/L)** in the **Route 4 E Inlet** on the **August** sampling event. This station has had a history of **elevated** and **fluctuating** total phosphorus concentrations. We recommend that your monitoring group conduct a stream survey and storm event sampling along this inlet so that we can determine what may be causing the increase.

*For a detailed explanation on how to conduct rain event sampling, please refer to the 2002 VLAP Annual Report “Special Topic Article” or contact the VLAP Coordinator.*

➤ **Table 9 and Table 10: Dissolved Oxygen and Temperature Data**

Table 9 (Appendix B) shows the dissolved oxygen/temperature profile(s) for the 2005 sampling season. Table 10 (Appendix B) shows the historical and current year dissolved oxygen concentration in the hypolimnion (lower layer). The presence of dissolved oxygen is vital to fish and amphibians in the water column and also to bottom-dwelling organisms. Please refer to the “Chemical Monitoring Parameters” section of this report for a more detailed explanation.

The dissolved oxygen concentration was ***lower in the hypolimnion (lower layer) than in the epilimnion (upper layer)*** at the deep spot of the lake on the **August** sampling event. As stratified lakes age, and as the summer progresses, oxygen typically becomes ***depleted*** in the hypolimnion by the process of decomposition. Specifically, the loss of oxygen in the hypolimnion results primarily from the process of biological breakdown of organic matter (i.e.; biological organisms use oxygen to break down organic matter), both in the water column and particularly at the bottom of the lake where the water meets the sediment. When oxygen levels are depleted to less than 1 mg/L in the hypolimnion (***as it was this season and in past seasons***), the phosphorus that is normally bound up in the sediment may be re-released into the water column (a process referred to as ***internal phosphorus loading***).

➤ **Table 11: Turbidity**

Table 11 (Appendix B) lists the current year and historical data for in-lake and tributary turbidity. Turbidity in the water is caused by suspended matter, such as clay, silt, and algae. Water clarity is strongly influenced by turbidity. Please refer to the “Other Monitoring Parameters” section of this report for a more detailed explanation.

The turbidity in the **Route 4 Inlet** sample was ***slightly elevated (1.84 NTUs)***. The turbidity at this station has been ***at least slightly elevated*** on most sampling events, which suggests that the stream bottom is easily disturbed or that erosion is occurring in this portion of the watershed.

When the stream bottom is disturbed, sediment, which typically contains attached phosphorus, is released into the water column. When collecting samples in the inlets, please be sure to sample where the stream is flowing and where the stream is deep enough to collect

a “clean” sample.

If you suspect that erosion is occurring in this portion of the watershed, we recommend that your monitoring group conduct a stream survey and storm event sampling along this inlet. This additional sampling may allow us to determine what is causing the **elevated** levels of turbidity.

*For a detailed explanation on how to conduct rain event sampling and stream surveys, please refer to the 2002 VLAP Annual Report “Special Topic Article” or contact the VLAP Coordinator.*

➤ **Table 12: Bacteria (*E.coli*)**

Table 12 lists only the historical data for bacteria (*E.coli*) testing. (Please note that Table 12 now lists the maximum and minimum results for all past sampling seasons.) *E. coli* is a normal bacterium found in the large intestine of humans and other warm-blooded animals. *E.coli* is used as an indicator organism because it is easily cultured and its presence in the water, in defined amounts, indicates that sewage **MAY** be present. If sewage is present in the water, potentially harmful disease-causing organisms **MAY** also be present.

It should be noted that bacteria sampling was not conducted this year. If residents are concerned about sources of bacteria such as failing septic systems, animal waste, or waterfowl waste, it is best to conduct *E. coli* testing when the water table is high, when beach use is heavy, or immediately after rain events.

➤ **Table 14: Current Year Biological and Chemical Raw Data**

This table lists the most current sampling season results. Since the maximum, minimum, and annual mean values for each parameter are not shown on this table, this table displays the current year “raw” (meaning unprocessed) data. The results are sorted by station, depth zone (epilimnion, metalimnion, and hypolimnion) and parameter.

➤ **Table 15: Station Table**

As of the Spring of 2004, all historical and current year VLAP data are included in the DES Environmental Monitoring Database (EMD). To facilitate the transfer of VLAP data into the EMD, a new station identification system had to be developed. While volunteer monitoring groups can still use the sampling station names that they have used in the past (and are most familiar with), an EMD station name also exists for each VLAP sampling location. For each station sampled at your lake, Table 15 identifies what EMD station name



corresponds to the station names you have used in the past and will continue to use in the future.

### **DATA QUALITY ASSURANCE AND CONTROL**

#### **Annual Assessment Audit:**

During the annual visit to your lake, the biologist conducted a “Sampling Procedures Assessment Audit” for your monitoring group. Specifically, the biologist observed the performance of your monitoring group while sampling and filled out an assessment audit sheet to document the ability of the volunteer monitors to follow the proper field sampling procedures (as outlined in the VLAP Monitor’s Field Manual). This assessment is used to identify any aspects of sample collection in which volunteer monitors fail to follow proper procedures, and also provides an opportunity for the biologist to retrain the volunteer monitors as necessary. This will ultimately ensure that the samples that the volunteer monitors collect are truly representative of actual lake and tributary conditions.

Overall, your monitoring group did an **excellent** job collecting samples on the annual biologist visit this season! Specifically, the members of your monitoring group followed the proper field sampling procedures and there was no need for the biologist to provide additional training. Keep up the good work!

### **USEFUL RESOURCES**

*Best Management Practices to Control Nonpoint Source Pollution: A Guide for Citizens and Town Officials*, NHDES Booklet WD-03-42, (603) 271-2975.

*Canada Geese Facts and Management Options*, NHDES Fact Sheet BB-53, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-53.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-53.htm).

*Cyanobacteria in New Hampshire Waters Potential Dangers of Blue-Green Algae Blooms*, NHDES Fact Sheet WMB-10, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-10.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-10.htm).

*Erosion Control for Construction in the Protected Shoreland Buffer Zone*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-SP-1, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-1.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-1.htm).

*Impacts of Development Upon Stormwater Runoff*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-WQE-7, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wqe/wqe-7.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wqe/wqe-7.htm).

*Lake Protection Tips: Some Do's and Don'ts for Maintaining Healthy Lakes*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-BB-9, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-9.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-9.htm).

*Low Impact Development Hydrologic Analysis*. Manual prepared by Prince George's County, Maryland, Department of Environmental Resources. July 1999. To access this document, visit [www.epa.gov/owow/nps/lid\\_hydr.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/lid_hydr.pdf) or call the EPA Water Resource Center at (202) 566-1736.

*Low Impact Development: Taking Steps to Protect New Hampshire's Surface Waters* NHDES Fact Sheet WD-WMB-16, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-17.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-17.htm).

*Proper Lawn Care In the Protected Shoreland, The Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-SP-2, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-2.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-2.htm).

*Road Salt and Water Quality*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-WMB-4, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-4.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-4.htm).

*Sand Dumping - Beach Construction*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-BB-15, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-15.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-15.htm).

*Soil Erosion and Sediment Control on Construction Sites*, NHDES Fact Sheet WQE-6, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wqe/wqe-6.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wqe/wqe-6.htm).

*Watershed Districts and Ordinances*, NHDES Fact Sheet WD-WMB-16, (603) 271-2975 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-16.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-16.htm).